

# Federal lawmakers should heed Simmons' calls for CIA reforms

The resignation of George Tenet as CIA director last week seemed to bring a surprising response, if only because many officials were so open about welcoming his departure.

Connecticut Congressman Robert Simmons, for one, was right on target in saying he "welcomes" the opportunity for change within the agency he proudly served before he turned to lawmaking. And federal officials should indeed heed Simmons' calls for reform. For while many talk about what needs to be done to bolster U.S. Intelligence, Simmons, R-2nd, brings a better perspective than most to the congressional table – and his basic ideas for reform still make the most sense of any recommendations to date.

Simmons – who first posed ideas for reforming the beleaguered

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U.S. intelligence force during a visit to The Sun amid preliminary congressional hearings in February – believes he has a basic answer for America's widespread intelligence problems: We need more spies. That means putting more people on the ground to physically infiltrate the governments and other entities posing a true danger to our nation and its people.

If you think that sounds costly, think again. Boosting America's spy force by even several hundred forces will certainly not come cheap – but it would come in place of the government's wrongheaded investment in too much – and too costly – intelligence technol-

ogy.

Satellites and other forms of electronic monitoring devices certainly have a role in many aspects of intelligence gathering. But over the past decade or more, the U.S. has come to rely far too heavily on electronics – backing off its human resources on the ground. In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, reports show the U.S. did not have a single intelligence officer who spoke the language of Afghanistan's Taliban government. That's embarrassing – and Simmons has said as much.

Tenet's departure could be viewed as leaving another hole in the leadership of America's intelligence community. But it opens the door to a wide variety of routes that can finally get America's misguided intelligence community back on track. In that sense, his departure represents not another crisis, but a very real opportunity for some desperately needed reform.

Let's hope the intelligence community and our congressional leaders have the courage to launch those reforms. And let's hope they have the common sense to listen to someone who knows the intelligence game, recognizes the problems, and has some very practical solutions.

Let's hope they give Rob Simmons the floor – and pursue the changes he seeks.